



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0483 – Private Well Safety Act of 2023

February 14, 2023

Dear Chairman Feldman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony **in support of SB 0483, *Private Well Safety Act of 2023***, on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland’s Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education. ShoreRivers believes that access for all communities to clean water is a basic human right—**what could be more essential than clean, safe, drinking water?** As a Riverkeeper, I research and collect water quality data including nitrogen, phosphorus, and fecal enterococci bacteria levels and communicate my findings to communities within my watershed so that individuals and families can make informed decisions about recreating in their local waterways. **The establishment of an accessible online database of well water quality results would allow Riverkeepers to connect their local communities to transparent, credible data about the ground water they drink.**

I work within Kent and Queen Anne’s counties, two of the most agricultural counties in Maryland. Large percentages of the population are reliant on well water and either do not test their wells regularly or have never tested their wells, leaving them at risk of ingesting coliform bacteria, harmful nitrates, and chemical runoff associated with agricultural practices. A Maryland Department of the Environment report from 2013 states that, “Nitrate pollution in groundwater is becoming increasingly problematic, [...] Due to agricultural land use practices, nitrate concentrations in shallow waters of unconfined Coastal Plain aquifers on Maryland’s Eastern Shore commonly exceed the Federal Drinking Water Standard.”¹ The department’s 2021 report indicates that not much has changed. **Requiring water quality testing during the sale of a home with a well will, at minimum, increase data available through the state’s online portal, and protect new homeowners from buying a home with contaminated and harmful water.**

Within my watershed, it is already overburdened and underserved communities who most often face the greatest risk of living with contaminated well water. This is a result of these communities residing in low-lying land that is disproportionately burdened with environmental hazards such as stormwater flooding and agricultural runoff. **The Private Well Safety Fund will provide eligible residents with financial assistance to cover the costs associated with water test kits, and provide the opportunity for these communities to remediate their wells when unsafe levels of contamination are found.** For these reasons, ShoreRivers urges the committee to adopt **Senate Bill 0483.**

Sincerely,
Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper on behalf of ShoreRivers

¹ Maryland Department of the Environment. *Groundwater Protection Program Annual Report to the Maryland General Assembly 2013*. July 2013. Available at https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/water_supply/Source_Water_Assessment_Program/Documents/FINAL_GWR%20report_1_2013%203_.pdf.

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